

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

Neither For Nor Against L.D. 879

**LD TITLE: An Act to Increase Wildlife Revenues and Grow the
Hunting and Fishing Industries**

SPONSORED BY: Senator TUTTLE of York

DATE OF HEARING: May 3, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Andrea Erskine, Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking neither for nor against **L.D. 879**.

L.D. 879 redefines an antlerless deer to be any deer without antlers or without any antler that has 3 or more antler points on one side. Implementing this restriction runs counter to the stated purpose of the bill which is to increase state wildlife resources and the hunting industries.

Antler Point Restrictions:

- Do not help grow the deer population
- Will not increase the buck age distribution
- Will decrease buck harvest
- Will result in loss of hunter opportunity
- Will limit the ability of the Department to control the deer population in Southern Maine
- In Northern Maine it will limit harvest and hunter success
- Is an inappropriate harvest restriction for managing deer across the State of Maine.

The implementation of antler point restrictions as proposed in this bill will limit deer hunting opportunity and deer management so therefore the Department is opposed to this portion of the bill.

L.D. 879 establishes a combination lifetime license for nonresidents 65 years of age or older for a one-time fee of \$500. The Department supports this portion of the bill. The Department requests that the Committee authorize the funds for an economic study to be conducted by an independent qualified entity to determine the proper fees to charge for

this new license. In addition, the bill as written specifies that all permits would be included in this new lifetime license which would make it different than the resident lifetime license for this same age group. For consistencies sake, the Department would request that the Committee make the nonresident and resident lifetime licenses the same in the area of whether or not permits are included in the lifetime license.

L.D. 879 also proposes to extend the current disabled veteran license to residents of New Hampshire and Vermont if those states have a reciprocal agreement with Maine. Currently, New Hampshire and Vermont have reciprocity in this area and it is reasonable to assume that they would include Maine in this agreement if this part of the bill became law. While this would result in a slight loss of revenue for the Department, it would also allow Maine resident disabled veterans to fish and hunt in both New Hampshire and Vermont each year at no cost.

Our Department has a strong cooperative agreement with landowners. We want to continue to strengthen those relationships while perhaps finding ways to provide landowners with incentives that ensure the long-term protection and management of Deer Wintering Areas.

I would be happy to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.